

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

All claims that were previously filed, claims 1, 5 and 7, remain in this Amendment B and Response.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102(e)

In section 2 of the Examiner's office action, the Examiner rejects the single independent claim, claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as anticipated by US Patent 6,138,123 issued to Rathbun. The Examiner states that Rathbun discloses the elements of claim 1 as recited. In particular, the Examiner refers to the Applicants' first Amendment and Response, where the Applicants stated that the query in the Rathbun reference "simply travels down the rightmost local link," as opposed to claim 1, which "provides greater flexibility by traversing from the root to any unused leaf in the data structure." The Examiner states that the argument has been fully considered but not found persuasive, in that "Rathbun also traverses from the root to a leaf in the data structure (see column 7, lines 4-22). The Applicants respectfully traverse. Notwithstanding the Examiner's cited traversal in Rathbun from root to leaf, this traversal only occurs down one branch of the subtree, in direct contrast to method recited in current claim 1. Accordingly, the Applicants request that the Examiner withdraw this rejection.

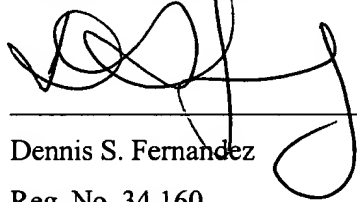
Should the Examiner find the Applicants argument unpersuasive, the Applicants would welcome further guidance by the Examiner as to any allowable subject matter in the current application. In the same vein, the Applicants request the Examiner's guidance in preparing the current application and entering the pending claims in proper format for appeal.

CONCLUSION

The Examiner office action in the current case was mailed on 11/18/2003, the period of response extending to 3 months to 2/18/2004, so no extension fee is required. The number of independent and total claims in the current amendment is unchanged, so there is no claim fee due. Should there be any fee due beyond the amount enclosed, the Examiner is authorized to charge it to the user account customer number listed below.

In view of the above, it is respectfully submitted by Applicants that the claims are in condition for allowance. Reconsideration of the rejections is requested. Allowance of the claims at an early date is solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



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Date: 2/13/04

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